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FAUST AND MARGARET.

Translated from the German of KARL ROSENKRANZ, by ANNA C. BRACKETT.

The first part of the tragedy may be said in general to lead us over from the unity of heaven into the disruption of the world. The angels, lost in the view of the universe, sing the praise of the Lord:

“ The sun-orb sings in emulation
Mid brother-spheres his ancient round :
His path predestined through creation
He ends with step of thunder sound.
The angels from his vision splendid
Draw power whose measure none can say ;
The lofty works, uncomprehended,
Are bright as on the earliest day.”

The world of finite relations comes to Faust, with Mephistophiles. He ridicules the longings which drive Faust into distance, like a fool half conscious of his folly, who seeks the most beautiful star out of the heavens, and at the same time the greatest pleasure on the earth. The Lord takes him, in spite of this accusation, into his protection, because the good man in his dim impulse is conscious of the right way. He guarantees success to Faust, while he bids Mephistopheles to try to draw him away from the Source of his being.

After this scene in heaven, we see Faust in his Gothic study, where he has spent so many sleepless nights over his books and papers. He breaks out in wild despair over the empty results of his efforts in the sciences. He has gone through them all. He is called Master and Doctor, but he has the consciousness that he is only making fools of his pupils. He is convinced that we can know nothing of the Truth, and this conviction well nigh consumes his heart. Philosophy is no fit subject for poetry, because it deals with pure thinking, which can admit of no sensuous images. The poet has therefore done rightly in painting this speculative pathos as a mere mood. Thus can philosophy appear as poetry, for the struggle of mankind after the certainty of truth is poetic. The majority of men pass their lives carelessly. They allow themselves to be content with everything in

the world, without troubling themselves to think at all about it. It exists, and they also. Day and night, the seasons, war and peace succeed each other. Man is born, eats, drinks, sleeps, dies, etc. But the philosopher is sick at the estrangement which thinking has created between itself and the world. The very same world with which the simple, average, every-day, believing man feels himself in such harmony, it is, which is torment for him. He does not hesitate to question the existence of the whole world; nay, more, his own. He will no longer deal in words, but he will look at all the active forces and germs in their truth. Since science has failed to satisfy Faust, he will try magic, which can however offer him only a theatrical spectacle. Knowledge, like our theoretical freedom, must be worked out by our own efforts. A knowledge which is conferred upon us contradicts the very idea of knowledge. The sign of the macrocosm shows to Faust the harmony of the universe, how the golden buckets rise and sink, how the divine forces sound forth their harmony through the All, how they press towards the earth laden with blessings. But alas! for him this is only a theatrical display. He knows not how to reach the sources of all this life. While they well forth and give drink to all, he languishes in vain. The sign of the microcosm produces another effect upon him. He feels himself lifted up in spirit, and glows as with new wine, but yet he cannot endure the flaming figure of the Earth Spirit whom he has conjured. A shudder seizes him who fancies himself superhuman, and the busy spirit who works

“In the tides of life, in action’s storm,”

between heaven and earth, tells him, imperiously, that he is like the spirit whom he comprehends—but not like him. The individual man feels himself powerless before the colossal forms of nature. Faust, who restlessly pressing onward, has become filled with despair over the emptiness of all knowledge, cannot but feel himself unequal to this restless, eternal change, always identical with itself in birth and death. Because he has not yet comprehended nature, does she strike him with awe, not, as many interpreters of the Earth Spirit would have it, because she is in and for herself higher than he.

Just here in the midst of the narrative the “Dryasdust” Wagner slinks in. He represents Empiricism, which is necessary to speculation, as the condition which the reality of appearance im-

poses upon thinking. Faust gives him good instruction for the pursuit of scientific investigation, and as soon as he has gone out prepares with serenity to commit suicide. A new day beckons him to new shores! He prepares for this, not because of any petty vexation, not from any sad consciousness of guilt, but because he can no longer endure his life, which is so barren of results. Death is for him an *experimentum crucis*. But it is too cheap from this theoretical standpoint. Passivity in the changing of surrounding circumstances does not correspond to the nature of the soul, which is to make of itself whatever it will. Of his own free will, as out of his own grave, must he rise to renewed life and effort if he would remain true to his own conviction. The memory of the faith of his childhood, of Christian faith, the faith in a possible regeneration, the true faith of the world stirs within him. Now he hears the words of the Easter chorus without having faith in it, but the remembrance of the childlike rest which once made him happy has still great power over him. The tears start, and the earth has again possession of him.

But here closes the sphere of heaven, and that of worldly things makes its appearance. Faust accompanies Wagner on a walk to the Easter festivities. He meets the crowd of people who have come out from miserable houses and the wretched corners of the narrow alleys to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord. But however finely he may comment upon the different groups, he is alone among them. The faith of the common people is foreign to his hypercritical mind. The unconstrained pleasure found in the dancing group around the linden, is entirely out of his life. He carries in his soul the wound of doubt, and of the boundless longing which transcends all. He would gladly fly away with the eagle who soars high over pine-clad heights and seas, or hasten on with the sun as he circles from land to land, from ocean to ocean, in everlasting glow of rosy dawn and setting. Then he notices a poodle which runs hither and thither, and takes it with him into his dwelling, whose retired quiet makes him once more feel an inclination for study.

“ Behind me field and meadow sleeping
I leave in deep, prophetic night,
Within whose dread and holy keeping
The better soul awakes to light.
The wild desires no longer win us,

The deeds of passion cease to chain ;
 The love of man revives within us,
 The love of God revives again.
 Ah, when within our narrow chamber
 The lamp with friendly lustre glows,
 Flames in the breast each faded ember
 And in the heart, itself that knows.
 Then Hope again lends sweet assistance,
 And Reason then resumes her speech ;
 One yearns, the rivers of existence,
 The very founts of Life to reach."

This he seeks in an examination of the New Testament, in which, as he expresses it, burns the most beautiful and most worthy revelation. He will translate the opening sentences of St. John's Gospel, and he must translate, "In the beginning was the Word," that is the eternal *Logos* as which God reveals himself in himself, and as which he in human speech reveals himself to the human soul. But this does not suit him. He can make nothing out of it, and after meditating he concludes that it should be Power. This however satisfies him no better, and he reflects till he finally makes up his mind and writes as the most reasonable: "In the beginning was the Deed." Thus is always made the dangerous exegesis [*Schluepfrige Exegese*]. It turns and twists the text till it suits the preconceived meaning. Faust, in whose veins glows the longing for life, translates by *Deed* what he should have translated *Word*, because he himself inclines toward life, toward a joyous activity. The poodle snarls at the holy words which occupy the whole soul of Faust. Faust ad-jures him, whereupon he swells to the size of an elephant, and the traveling scholar steps forth from the figure as its kernel.

"The result makes me laugh," exclaims Faust to him, and he is at once on familiar terms with him, for he is like to this spirit. The Earth Spirit had made him tremble, but the Spirit of Evil, or evil-mindedness, is well known to him as his like, and with him he at once strikes a bargain to belong to him wholly as soon as he shall ever once be content with a moment of inactivity. When Mephistopheles completes this bargain, he expects to be able to cheat Faust by means of some trifling thing of little significance, but here he makes his mistake. The Lord, who decreed the confusion of Mephistopheles, knows man better. To begin with, the devil lulls Faust into an undefined and dim expectation of great pleasures. The choir of his spirits sing :

“ Vanish ye darkling
Arches above him!
Loveliest weather,
Born of blue ether,
Break from the sky!
O that the darkling
Clouds had departed!
Starlight is sparkling,
Tranquiller-hearted
Suns are on high,” &c.

The covenant with Faust has made the whole world of spirits resound with sad discords. He has, like a demigod, shattered the whole world. It trembles, it falls. He must begin a new life and build it up anew in his own breast. But the prescribed beginning does not please Faust. Mephistopheles leads him to Auerbach's cellar, to a riotous drinking debauch, so that he shall see how easy life is. But this beastly coarseness, which can be pleased with obscenity, poor jokes and drinking, does not touch Faust. Then Mephistopheles has him drink of the elixir of youth, in the witches' kitchen, so that he shall see in every woman a Helen. Thus comes the transition to Margaret, whom Faust first looks at in the light of sensual pleasures, but the longer he looks the more he goes over into genuine love, and thus disappoints the devil's expectation, who designed that he should feel in his passion only what was sensual and selfish.

If Faust is to represent man in general, woman must come to him that he may be complete. As a man alone, he may be scholar, philosopher, partaker in the world's work, even a hero, but he can rise to complete manhood only through love. No man is fully man except in his relation to woman, for whatever is beautiful in him so first becomes revealed. In the old story the merchant's daughter refuses to give herself up to Faust. She insists upon marriage, which is expressly forbidden to Faust through an article in the devil's compact. From this, Goethe's Idealism has created the beautiful figure of Margaret.

Her story is what constitutes the dramatic action of the first part. But what is her story but the simple tragedy of woman, consisting in the loss of maidenly honor through love, for without love one could have no tragic demerit. Betrayed innocence and the consequences of her guilt, how they desolate and shatter her life! We must say with Heine:

“It is the olden story,
 Yet ever new again;
 And whensoever it happens
 Then breaks a heart in twain.”

Margaret is the crown jewel of all the womanly creations of Goethe. Iphigenia, Leonora, Dorothea, must all yield to her, however perfect they are in themselves, for they fail in her depth and simplicity. Margaret, this lovely child, this soul so full of faith, this shy maiden, longing for love, this sweet, enthusiastic, laughing rose-bud, whose peace is fled, whose heart is heavy after she has seen him, who has after that but one thought—Heinrich—to catch a glimpse of whom she gazes out of the window, who only to be near him goes out of the house—this Margaret is the genuine German maiden in all her peculiarities, even to that charming little snappish way in which she sends the importunate Faust from her side as she comes from church:

“I’m neither lady, neither fair,
 And home I can go without your care.”

This is to Faust entirely charming. By means of ornaments and the artful sophistry of her neighbor, she lets herself be led away, and her fall leads on the whole series of evil. The mother dies from the sleeping draught, and the brother, who stigmatizes her as a wanton, perishes on the threshold of the house, where Faust would have tamed the clown with his sword-thrusts.

We have here entered into the sphere of hell, for Guilt has made its appearance, and the consciousness of it, however much it may seek to suppress itself, must and will be recognized. Margaret, who feels the newly developing life at her heart, can no more gossip at the well with the other maidens. She casts herself down before the all-pitying Mother, Mary, but in the church even, the contradiction of her life overwhelms her. The spirit of the church takes up all into itself, rich and poor, young and old, good and bad. But the guilty one trembles before the terrible earnestness of the spirit, of whom the choir sing:

Judex ergo cum sedebit
 Quidquid latet, apparebit.
 Nil inultum remanebit.

It is as if fury seizes Margaret. She hears the trumpet sound, the graves yawn, and she falls in a swoon.

This picture is wrought by the artist with the most intense, fearful, and yet exquisite, tragical colors. In a few words, touches and scenes, he has painted innocence, beauty, fascination, love, passion, guilt, and the torment of conscience. Faust seeks to fly from the surroundings of his guilt. He tries to forget himself in the solitary brooding of sophistry, in the tempest of inane debauch, in giving himself over to insipid dissipation. But in the midst of the distorted figures on the Blocksberg he sees a beautiful, pale child, her feet bound, and with a red mark round her neck, urged slowly onward. It is Margaret, whatever the devil may say. His consciousness of sin breaks forth. He overwhelms Mephistopheles with curses, that he has concealed from him Margaret's misery. Here Goethe has introduced prose, but with uncommon power, and Mephistopheles, in this dilemma, endeavors, not for the first time, and much in the fashion of tyrants, to overwhelm him with thunder.

Margaret, to escape public shame, motherless, brotherless, has murdered her child—this little Margaret! This gentle, dear, good maiden? Yes, this sweet, this lovely girl, has thrown the child, born in the peril of death, into the pond! The judgment for such a deed of despairing shame has overtaken her. She awaits in prison her execution. But, unable to endure the contradiction of her loving heart, and the actual, terrible deed, she has become insane. She did not desire the deaths of her mother, her brother, her child, and yet they are dead and testify against her. She is, through her love, the source of all this evil. Faust endeavors to lead her away. She loves him although she might curse him, but she always loves him, remaining in the midst of her distraction of soul, always true to the holy voice which promises her reconciliation through the punishment of her sin. Mephistopheles, after his fashion, speaks only of the execution. But even while she is judged she is saved.

NOTE.—The translations here given from the *Faust* are those of Bayard Taylor.

A. C. B.